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IS
CBFMS
A
FAITH MISSION?



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THE QUESTION is often asked, "Is CBFMS a faith mission?"

The question is not easy to answer because the very term "faith mission" is not easy to define. Most Christians classify missionary organizations into two categories—the "faith" mission and the "denominational" mission.

Actually, the line of demarcation is not quite that simple. There are wide variations within both groups. The first great "faith mission," the China Inland Mission, was built on the principle of never soliciting funds from any source and never publicly mentioning financial needs. Few faith missions today seek to operate strictly on that principle.

Today "faith missions" are usually thought of as those having most of the following characteristics:

- 1) They embrace missionaries of many denominational backgrounds, providing they subscribe to the great fundamentals such as salvation by faith, belief in the divine inspiration of the scriptures, separation from worldliness, the lost state of the heathen, the second coming of Christ, etc. However, there are several faith boards which limit themselves to missionaries of one denomination.

- 2) Missionaries are sent "on faith." The exact meaning of this phrase is elu-

sive and differs from board to board. In most boards it simply means that the board does not "guarantee" a salary and that the missionary must trust God to provide the funds which will support him. However, most faith boards do not send a missionary to a field until pledges or promises have come from individuals or churches sufficient to support the missionary.

3) Usually faith boards have no formal organization such as a group of churches behind them. In other words, they are not the official "missionary arm" of any denomination at home.

4) Most faith boards are run by a self-perpetuating board of directors. This means that the members of the board elect the individuals who will serve with them when vacancies occur through death, resignation, or expiration of term.

5) Most faith boards place primary emphasis on evangelistic work rather than on educational, medical, and institutional work.

6) Most faith boards are less strict regarding educational qualifications of candidates than are "denominational" boards, but are more strict regarding their evangelical position.

If these are the characteristics of faith boards, does CBFMS fall into that cate-

gory? Let us look at each of these points in turn.

1. CBFMS does not embrace missionaries of various denominational backgrounds. Each CBFMS missionary is Baptist not only in church membership but in conviction. Each candidate must be thoroughly evangelical in doctrine.

2. CBFMS is a "faith mission" in the sense that we trust God to supply all of our financial needs. As in most faith missions, CBFMS missionaries are appointed with the understanding that their support must be underwritten before they can proceed to the field. This annual support provides both for personal needs and field needs. However, CBFMS does have a definite salary scale which is included in this "annual support" figure so that all missionaries are equitably cared for. We are grateful to God that He has supplied these needs through the designated support of our faithful constituency.

3. Although CBFMS has no formal organization of churches behind it, it does have a constituency of Bible-believing Baptist churches which helped to bring the society into being and which believe in its policies and doctrinal stand. These churches look to CBFMS as the missionary arm of the local church.

4. CBFMS does not have a self-perpetuating board as do most faith missions. The board of directors is elected by representatives of supporting churches. According to the constitution, no director is permitted to serve more than six consecutive years. Every effort is made to make the society closely responsible to those who support it.

CBFMS operates on democratic principles, both at home and in the foreign field. Each missionary has equal voice. Missionaries are urged to establish a strong field organization to encourage a well-rounded, stable program.

5. CBFMS, like most faith boards, places primary emphasis on evangelistic work, although it seeks to implement evangelism through medical missions and to support evangelism with an adequate educational program to train native leadership for strong indigenous churches. All CBFMS institutional work is operated for the purpose of reaching souls for Christ and building them up in Christian discipleship.

6. CBFMS appoints only candidates who are thoroughly evangelical, who have a passion for the lost and who have prepared themselves for missionary service with proper academic training. CBFMS confessedly requires more educational background than do most faith boards.

However, current trends among faith boards is to encourage stronger academic background for candidates.

Although it is apparent that CBFMS has some distinct differences from the usual concept of a "faith board," it must be pointed out that in actual practice our missionaries find their closest spiritual fellowship with missionaries of the great faith boards. In several fields, CBFMS works in close cooperation with these interdenominational evangelical groups.

CBFMS is a "faith board" in that it is built upon adherence to the historic faith "which was once and for all delivered unto the saints"; it trusts God in faith to supply the financial and spiritual needs of the work; it is dedicated to the purpose of propagating the faith to a lost and dying world.



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